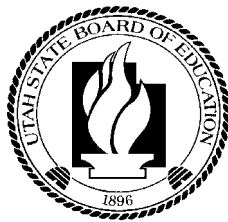


**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Wasatch Junior High School
3750 South 3100 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-3719**

January 27-28, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Wasatch Junior High School
3750 South 3100 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-3719**

January 27-28, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, January 27-28, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Wasatch Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Doug Bingham is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Wasatch Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Wasatch Junior High School.

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Executive Officer

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**Board of Regents Appointments*

10/30/03

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Tom Given	Supervisor, Transportation and Maintenance
Dr. Sharon Prescott	Supervisor, Elementary Education
Bob Ward	Supervisor, School Lunch

WASATCH JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Douglas Bingham..... Principal
Michael Keeley Assistant Principal

Counseling

Robyn Bechthold Counselor
Sue Bell Counselor
Karen Taylor Counselor

Support Staff

Kathy Keller School Psychologist
Peggy Clark Hearing Specialist
Ann Johns Speech Therapist
Tracy Buys TCM

Faculty

Ann Aagard	Tom Heywood	Rachel Reese
Heather Allred	Malee Jergensen	Bonnie Schoenberger
Ben Anderson	Kathy Kerby	Bill Shaw
Pierre Baigue	B.J. Lawyer	Diane Stubbs
Tom Burke	Robert Lindsay	Kim Stucki
Lynne Burningham	Ellen Lindsey	Susan Taggart
Karen Dodge	Diana Linton	Kathy Thompson
Glen Fagg	Sam McBride	Vicki Turner
Ann Florence	Dianne McDonald	Paul Watson
Jill Gills	Tom Miller	Karen Westerman
LaDonna Gustafson	Mike Niederhauser	Helen White
Lynne Gutke	Alice Pena	Chris Wightman
David Henderson	Kathy Potter	

WASATCH JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Wasatch Junior High is dedicated to creating a physically and emotionally safe environment where students prepare for the future through academics, technology, and social responsibility.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Every person has value and is treated with respect in a safe environment.

Every person has the responsibility for his or her choices.

Education is a partnership based upon effective communication, involving the school, parents, and community.

Each student's unique talents and skills are acknowledged and encouraged.

Challenging expectations for all students, based on a core curriculum in a supportive learning environment, will increase individual student performance.

Technology is used as a tool to acquire and synthesize information.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Karyn Bertelsen, Central Davis Junior High, Davis School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Steve Diamond, Indian Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Dana Hill, Mountain Ridge Junior High, Alpine School District

Michelle Putnam, South Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

Nancy Schleiger, Elk Ridge Middle School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

WASATCH JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Wasatch Junior High School is located on the east bench of Salt Lake City, Utah, in Granite School District, and serves grades seven through nine. Presently, Wasatch Junior High School serves a student population of 900. Because of declining enrollment, approximately 60–65 percent of Wasatch’s total enrollment comes from outside its established boundaries. The majority of the students come from upper-middle-class families, where 91 percent of the population is Caucasian and median salary is approximately \$60,000.

Besides having two special education cluster units, Wasatch Junior High School has a higher number of students enrolled in the Access Program (Gifted and Talented) than other junior high in the Granite School District. Over 20 percent of the school’s teachers are licensed with gifted endorsements in English, social studies, or science.

Teachers meet weekly in 7th, 8th, and 9th grade teams to collaborate on “best practices” in teaching and learning, student behavior, and achievement gaps identified in their SAT and CRT tests. These meetings are followed up with a yearly Site Student Achievement Plan that provides goals for the school. In keeping with middle school philosophy, the goal of teachers is to provide a learning environment that is caring and responsive to the developmental needs of these students.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Wasatch Junior High School’s SAT and CRT scores are significantly higher than district and state scores. Scores on each of these tests range from the high 60th percentile to 79th percentile. Disaggregation of SAT data shows an achievement gap in pre-writing. In all other areas of the test, 70–80 percent of students scored in the top quartile.

CRT scores in 2002 showed a decline in Math 7; because of this, the school received training in math manipulatives and is seeing an increase in scores. Also, the test scores indicated that there is a higher failure rate among the special education students, and an identified body of slow learners.

It is widely known that students attending Wasatch Junior High School are predominately there because of the school’s high academic achievement and its large number of gifted and other quality programs (i.e., math, drama, orchestra). Gifted classes are offered in 7th, 8th, and 9th grade English, math, science, and social studies. Parental support and involvement in the school is evident.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The efforts of the teachers and staff in disaggregating data are commendable. It would be beneficial, for interpretation purposes, to include a description at the end of each chart, combine similar information, and use colored charts for improved analysis.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The staff has done a very good job of including essential data in the profile to develop an effective action plan. However, the school action plan needs to more clearly delineate WJHS's specific needs, along with a definite alignment with the desired results for student learning.
- To provide more direct services to the special needs students, a plan of action and program components should be more clearly identified.
- The staff should consider reexamining the parent and student Quality Instructional Program survey data by comparing satisfaction levels of students and parents. This comparison would allow each department and grade team to set individual performance goals/standards for their department and work collaboratively to achieve these goals.
- The Visiting Team recognizes the extensive involvement of many stakeholders in drafting the school action plan. It is recommended that the organizational and leadership component be expanded to include more teacher-leaders.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Wasatch Junior High School has made a concerted effort to engage various stakeholder groups in a collaborative self-study process. The principal facilitated the self-study process with the faculty and parents, and directed the various stages of the self-study. Following the facilitation of each stage of the process, the principal provided additional time for meetings that involved the PTA and a cadre of teachers in analyzing student achievement data and survey results, refined the school mission and belief statements, and identified school improvement goals. After each meeting, the draft went to the faculty for feedback. Each stakeholder had a voice in the final draft of each stage. In the future, the principal stated, he

will organize a team of teachers who will take on the role of teacher-leaders and provide guidance for the implementation of school improvement plan. The Visiting Team found that the stakeholders have been involved in each phase of the self-study and will continue to ensure that the school's improvement plan will be implemented.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

One of the major strengths of the visit was the candor of the staff and community in their reflection on the school and self-study. Each stakeholder held a strong commitment to the goals and a strong dedication to implementing the SIP.

The school did an outstanding job of addressing the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs. There is evidence of alignment and connection of the mission to each belief statement. The Visiting Team found the implementation and indicators of success for the DRSLs to be vague in the SIP. Each department formulated its analysis in a different format; because of this, analysis by the Visiting Team was more difficult.

The profile called attention to issues that the staff addressed in its action plan and yearly school improvement plan for the district. The administration identified each area of needed improvement for student achievement and was starting to formulate a plan to continue the improvement for next year.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Wasatch Junior High's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Personal and Social Responsibility
 - Students take responsibility for personal actions and act ethically, demonstrating honesty, fairness, integrity, and respect.
 - Students respect themselves and others and understand and appreciate diversity.
 - Students take responsibility for their own health and wellness
 - Students act as responsible citizens in their school, community, state, nation, and world
2. Effective Communication
 - Students plan, organize, and select ideas to communicate.
 - Students communicate with clarity and purpose using a variety of communication skills.

- Students recognize and evaluate when to apply various forms of communication.
3. Interpersonal Goals
 - Students work with others in a variety of situations to set and achieve goals.
 - Students demonstrate their unique talents and skill through participation in extracurricular activities and enrichment programs.
 - Students deal with disagreement and conflict in a positive manner.
 4. Thinking and Reasoning Skills
 - Students gather, classify, organize and use information effectively to gain new knowledge.
 - Students demonstrate the use of higher level thinking skills.
 - Students use multiple strategies to solve problems.
 - Students generate new and creative ideas.
 5. Life Long Learning
 - Students commit to creating quality work and striving for excellence.
 - Students use a variety of learning strategies, personal skills, and time management skills to enhance learning.
 - Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of improvement.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Wasatch Junior High School began in the spring of 2001 to reevaluate its mission and belief statements. The school participated in the following processes:

1. Training for was provided to assist faculty in the review of their prior mission and belief statements, and in the development process of renewing and creating their current mission and belief statements.
2. Each grade level team took the basic work completed by the larger group and analyzed it over a period of weeks to discuss any insights and provide suggestions for the consideration of the whole staff.
3. The input provided by the grade level teams was put together and presented to the whole staff. The staff deliberated and debated until consensus was reached.

4. The newly created statements were presented to the Community Council Leadership Team for its input and final approval.

This process generated much discussion and thought, although there were not many changes made to the prior statements, as they had been reevaluated extensively only four years previously.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The beliefs that Wasatch Junior High has developed and created are supportive of the school's mission statement, which is focused upon student achievement and success in the future. Each belief relates to a component of the mission statement, and reflects the school's commitment to develop and continue partnerships within the school, with the parents, and for the community. The mission statement and the beliefs of the school are posted throughout the building and were noted in almost every classroom. Those administrative and faculty members who shared their thoughts and feelings demonstrated an ownership and a full commitment to ensuring the success of each student in his or her academic pursuits.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The school's DRSLs express those characteristics listed in the mission statement and belief statements in more specific detail and greater depth. Each DRSL can be correlated to a specific component of the mission and belief statements.

In developing the DRSLs, the faculty members attended in-service on the purpose for DRSLs and the component of their school's improvement plan that DRSLs would represent. The school team used the pamphlet *Life Skills*, published by the Utah State Office of Education, as a reference guide in selecting and clarifying their own broad goals for student learning outcomes. Following deliberation by the faculty and administration in the development process of DRSLs, a committee of parents and faculty members met to collaborate and define the DRSLs more narrowly. DRSLs were then presented to student groups for discussion and input. The adapted DRSLs were then presented again to the full faculty for reconsideration and adoption.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Within the individual departments, it is apparent that the staff is working to align their curricula with the State Core. Evidence has been found that individuals are making significant strides in using the “backwards design” philosophy. The Core Curriculum is guiding the essential questions and, thus, the concepts being taught, often leaving the textbook as a reference. For example, many teachers in the Math Department are using a month-to-month curriculum map developed by the district. This map has helped teachers to improve their alignment with the Core, increase math applications to real life, and improve student interest.

Some teachers have expressed a desire to integrate their curricula with other departments more effectively, but feel they are limited in this regard due to scheduling and time constraints. Grade-level teaming has been a valuable tool in helping allowing teachers time to work with one another. This time has been used to develop some cross-curricular assignments and to determine due dates for major tests and projects.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Throughout the school, most teachers are familiar with the DRSLs and agree with their importance. The accreditation process has brought the importance of teaching lifelong skills back to the forefront of the educational process, allowed the teachers to reevaluate methods they have implemented in the past, and given staff the opportunity to develop the DRSLs by “going deeper” with them as guides to instruction.

In some departments, DRSLs are a driving force when developing the curriculum. In others, many teachers are consciously aware of when the DRSLs are being taught in their classrooms as part of their regular curriculum.

There is considerable evidence that teachers are using a variety of teaching strategies that help support the goals designed in the DRSLs. For example, students are developing PowerPoint presentations in many of their classes to teach their peers the curriculum, writing is being used in all areas of the school, and students are often asked to critique each other.

Schoolwide, there has been a focus on developing time management skills by using student planners. The ninth grade team set a goal to use the planners and check them on a weekly basis. The effectiveness of this goal is questionable due to the lack of follow-through by the teachers.

It is recommended that the staff develop a schoolwide plan to focus on the DRSLs, making sure to use them as guiding principles in what and how to teach.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

This faculty, with the exception of a very few teachers, is exemplary in designing and implementing a variety of learning experiences that actively engage their students. According to administrators, parents, faculty, and students, the variety of learning opportunities contribute to student satisfaction, providing them with agency, choice, and a feeling of caring from the teachers. The variety of learning experiences generates excitement and motivation to help the students desire to actively engage in the learning process.

Some of the active learning experiences that are used include Project Learning, Cooperative Learning, group decision and consensus projects, PowerPoint presentations, movie making, skit performances, active student teaching, play productions, music performances, debate, Reading to Learn, Writing to Learn, discussion, Essential Question searches, poster presentations, sports activities, research projects, learning labs, journalism projects, math manipulatives, oral reports, presentations, and other hands-on, life-learning applications.

The teachers have designed these activities from ideas gained through in-services, workshops, Internet resources, classes, and sharing with each other.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

Most faculty members are fully engaged in actively employing a variety of instruction strategies for varied learner needs. The strategies involved with Bloom's Taxonomy, Understanding By Design, Essential Questions, hands-on learning, research, learning styles methods, evaluation of student work, technology engagement, inter-curricular webbing, tutoring, and Life Connections were all observed in action. However, some students disclosed that a small faction of the faculty members were not current in providing enriching and engaging strategies for learning. Some of the faculty members indicated that more work and research may be needed to help them more fully understand strategies and processes that would meet the needs for academic progress and motivation for at-risk students.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The school leadership and professional staff provide activities that promote and support student learning both in the classroom and after school. Students from Skyline High School come two evenings a week to tutor students who need assistance. Former students return to assist with tutoring. Grade level teacher

teams meet regularly to collaborate and plan assistance for individual students who may need extra assistance. School planners are provided for students. Planners provide space for parent/teacher communications. Assignments are clearly posted in every classroom. Remediation classes are provided for students with failing midterm grades to assist them in making up missed work. The MORE Class is offered for 9th grade students who need to improve study skills in English and geography. Service activities are provided.

The Counseling Department provides supportive interventions such as SEOPs, small group meetings, program choices, and intensive collaboration with students and parents. A Prevention Specialist provides the “Hope for Tomorrow” program. Three assemblies are provided per year for parents, and three more assemblies for students, to address addiction, suicide, depression, and eating disorders.

Several clubs and academic competitions provide opportunities for extracurricular involvement. The administration is also working with one business partner that provides a luncheon each month for two students from each grade level who have demonstrated improvement in academics or attitude. At the end of the year, two students from each grade level who have made a difference in the lives of other students are recognized.

Currently, research is occurring to assist the administration and staff in developing more effective collaboration structures and schedule adaptations which may further support student learning.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Through the disclosures and planners that are given to all students, a large majority of the faculty members provide their grading scales. Disclosures are used by majority of teachers. Disclosure statements are used to provide parents and students with information about the different types of assessments. Plans are in place to ensure that this becomes a basic part of all teachers’ disclosure.

Students who were interviewed talked positively about the use of planners. Students said that the use of different assessments depended on the subject matter and/or the teacher. Students felt comfortable, and even see the different assessments as a strength in demonstrating their understanding.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

In talking with teachers about assessments, the Visiting Team found them excited to discuss such things as mobiles, PowerPoint presentations, and portfolios. Teachers were able to show rubrics or explain their expectations. Students working in the computer lab showed projects they were working on. They displayed worksheets showing the project and the grading method. Students didn't know these were rubrics, but they could explain what they had to do to earn a certain grade.

Teachers observed were aware of the standards. Some teachers conveyed to students the standards and the DRSLs, and how these applied to the assignment. A large portion of the staff has assessments that align with the DRSLs. Assessments are completed not only on subject matter, but also using group work, poetry, and debates that address specific DRSLs. The Visiting Team's recommendation is that more teachers become involved in expanding their assessments.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

In talking with students, it was evident that a large majority (all that the Visiting Team talked with) felt that they were being tested on material that was taught. Students also feel that teachers are willing to re-teach or give extra help when needed. Students reported that attendance is very important, because teachers don't teach just from the book. If students are absent, they "miss out on too much."

What was not evident, and needs to be addressed in each class, is what help is available for that small number of students who are at risk.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

There is evidence that the leadership of Wasatch Junior High School has encouraged and supported teachers by making time for faculty collaboration, with an emphasis on best practice methodology. All staff members have attended workshops in the Six Traits of Writing, Backwards Design and Essential Questions, brain development, learning styles, teaming, drugs and alcohol education, and adolescent development. Some of the teaching staff assumed leadership roles during collaboration time by delivering some of these professional development opportunities to their colleagues.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership is beginning to employ data-driven, research-based decision making. SAT and CRT data are analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is recommended that additional data with larger samples be used to continue to focus on future improvement efforts.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The administration and faculty analyze SAT and CRT data, noting specific strengths and weaknesses. Plans were developed to focus on the general areas of concern, as well as begin to address the needs of at-risk students. Part of this plan is to discuss at-risk students during team meetings and formulate strategies that can be implemented by the team, counselors, and administration to address individual concerns.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The leadership at Wasatch Junior High School provides skillful stewardship of the school. Parents, students, and staff commended the school's leadership for building a sense of community and being receptive to new ideas. Schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission statement and are designed to support student learning. The allocation and use of resources are aligned with school goals.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The allocations and resources of funds at Wasatch Junior High are aligned with the school goals and school improvement plan. However, the Visiting Team questions the understanding and implementation of the DRSLs, and recommends that allocations be made in the support and implementation of the DRSLs in the classroom.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The administrative team recognizes and empowers staff members, parents, and students to share in the responsibility of leadership. In doing so, the administration encourages commitment, participation, and collaboration. The

administration is encouraged to continue building the knowledge, skills, and expertise of the staff to employ data-driven and research-based decision making.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team recognizes the positive and productive relationships that exist among students, parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators. There is strong evidence that the school is creating and sustaining a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of a caring community. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to continue its effective collaboration across departments, while fostering collegiality and providing cross-curricular connections for students. The Visiting Team also encourages the investigation of ways (such as common planning time) to provide additional effective collaboration time for faculty.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

There is evidence of a strong climate of community and pride demonstrated through parent involvement, administration support, student connection, and staff dedication. Students feel that their teachers are fair, caring, and helpful. The majority of the students seem to be dedicated to the pursuit of academic success, with most students feeling they are a part of the educational community with its many available school activities.

There is effective collaboration taking place within teams; however, the Visiting Team recommends that collaboration efforts be expanded among the Art, Business, Drama, Music, and Physical Education Departments.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

There is strong evidence that the faculty is actively involved in professional development, with all members attending workshops in the Six Traits of Writing, Backwards Design and Essential Questions, brain development, learning styles, teaming, drug and alcohol education, and adolescent development.

The administration supports teachers and staff in encouraging participation in outside professional development activities. The school sustains commitment to continuous improvement by advertising and/or providing many professional development opportunities, while paying for some workshop fees and/or substitutes. It is suggested that additional professional development be focused on classroom DRSL implementation.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

There is evidence that the administration supports the work of individuals and groups to implement improvement by encouraging and supporting ideas from teachers as they work to bring in new programs and new methods of teaching their curricula. Within the school's action plan, the need to "develop more engaging learning delivery systems in order to meet the needs of a broad range of learners" is identified. There is evidence that the staff is seeking ways to address this concern. It is strongly recommended that the staff look at formal as well as informal assessments to collect data in order to verify that effective teaching strategies are being used in the classroom, assuring that all students are learning.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most public junior highs and middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the Utah State Office of Education – it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The schoolwide action plan addresses the need for improvement in three major areas of concern. The identified areas are: (1) developing learning strategies that align with the school goals and DRSLs, (2) comprehensive professional development, and (3) improving the quality and frequency of student writing in all curricular areas.

The school stakeholders are acutely aware of these concerns and are working to bring about improvement in these areas through implementation of their school's

action plan, continual study by their focus groups and departments, and recommendations from the Community Council and parents.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

The majority of Wasatch Junior High School stakeholders participated in the development of the school's action plan. Since they have had the opportunity for input and development of this plan, it is assumed that the staff will collaborate and work to ensure it is followed.

The current action plan will need some revision to align the DRSLs and the action plan so they more closely reflect the same needs and concerns. The Visiting Team feels that the staff has a strong resolve to see that the action plan is followed, and will be committed to these recommendations.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The current action plan does not articulate an effective method for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan. As a result of the site visit, the staff understands the importance of data (collection and use) to show the school's progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement efforts. The current action plan will require some revision to reflect the recommendations of the Visiting Team.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the staff for implementing an effective self-study process. The process included numerous opportunities for teacher, parent, and student input, and involved an extensive amount of conversation among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of their work on student achievement. The results of this process, and the continual in-depth work of the past with the School/Site Student Achievement Plan, guide the quality work at Wasatch Junior High School and have the potential to guide the work of the school for the next six years.

The Visiting Team would remind the staff that this is a continual process and the beginning of a journey of commitment to student achievement. This journey may take different paths as a result of middle school recommendations and data

introduced along the way, but there is confidence that the staff will implement the action plan.

- The Visiting Team commends the teachers and staff for establishing and maintaining a climate of positive learning that provides for the high number of parents wanting their students to attend Wasatch Junior High School. The evidence is clear that there is a strong sense of community and commitment among teachers to each student's success and achievement. It is also clear from parent and student interviews that this is a safe and educationally stimulating school for student learning. There is tremendous pride among parents and students in Wasatch Junior High School's teachers, staff, and administration. One student said, "It's too good to be true."
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for its foresight and major commitment to staff development. The positive outcome of these efforts was observable by the Visiting Team. Although the staff members are in various stages of middle school philosophy, the Visiting Team encourages continued research into best practices in instructional strategies for continued growth.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its investigation of best practices. It is recommended that the school maintain current practices of grade-teaming, balanced with more defined organizational structures for collaboration between departments.
- The Visiting Team applauds the administration for already addressing weak points defined by the data in math, and for implementing the use of math manipulatives. The Visiting Team encourages that this practice continue and be addressed in the action plan.
- Although the staff is in the beginning stages of implementing "writing across the curriculum" (an identified weak area), the Visiting Team applauds these efforts and encourages the staff to continue the practice.
- In reading the self-study, the Visiting Team recognized some inconsistencies in the reporting of the implementation of the desired results for student learning. Some teachers felt they had already been teaching the various DRSLs in their programs, while others were investigating methods of implementation. Those reporting the DRSLs implementation stated they would teach the DRSLs in greater depth. It is suggested that the action plan include a goal that addresses a systematic process for the implementation and assessment of desired results for student learning.

- Abundant evidence showed a concerted effort by the leadership to implement the school's beliefs and mission for continuous school improvement. However, the Visiting Team recommends that the school's organizational procedures be designed to include staff members as leaders of the process and clearly delineate the procedures and process to the staff.